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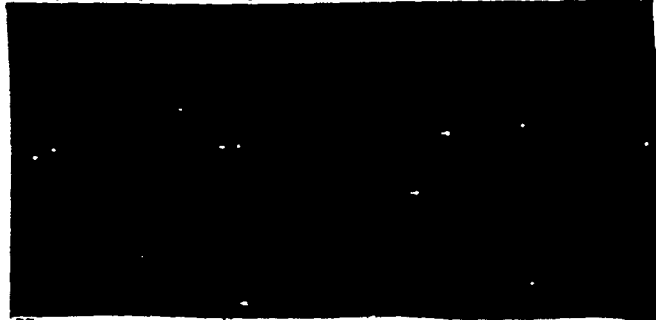
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DIA FOR IR BRANCH
SUBJ: IR [REDACTED] GUATEMALA/A JUNIOR OFFICER'S COMMENTS ON
THE COUP - BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER(U)
THIS IS AN INFO-REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTEL
1. (U) CTRY: GUATEMALA (GT)
2. (U) IR NO: [REDACTED]
3. (U) TITLE: A JUNIOR OFFICER'S COMMENTS ON THE COUP -
BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER (U)
4. (U) DATE OF INFO: 820325 - 820326
5. (ZAEUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUAORIG: SEE FM LINE
6. (U) REQ REFS: [REDACTED]
7. (U) SOURCE: [REDACTED]

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NOT AS WIDESPREAD AS MANY PEOPLE FIRST BELIEVED. FOUR (4) MILITARY UNITS OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL WERE READY TO STAGE A COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IN SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT, WHILE THREE (3) OTHER UNITS REMAINED NEUTRAL WITH NO INTENT OF SUPPORTING OR OPPOSING THE ACTIONS TAKING PLACE. ONLY THE PERSONAL INTERVENTION OF BG MANUEL BENEDICTO ((LUCAS)) GARCIA PREVENTED A BLOODBATH ON THAT DAY. PRECOUP INVOLVEMENT OF BG JOSE EFRAIN RIOS MONTT REMAINS UNCLEAR. THE GENERAL MAY HAVE BEEN CONTACTED PRIOR TO 23 MARCH TO PROVIDE OPINIONS BUT APPARENTLY WAS NOT OFFERED THE JUNTA PRESIDENCY. THE GENERAL IS CONSIDERED TO BE DEMOGOGIC AND AT TIMES SOMEWHAT ECCENTRIC; HOWEVER, HE IS VIEWED AS AN INTERIM CARETAKER WHO POSSESSES THE QUALITIES (HONESTY, MORALITY, LEADERSHIP) NECESSARY TO CHANGE THE IMAGE OF THE COUNTRY WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CONSTRUCTING A SOLID GOVERNMENTAL FOUNDATION TO PASS ON TO A CIVILIAN SUCCESSOR. DESPITE THESE PERCEPTIONS, DISSATISFACTION AMONG SOME (NFI) JUNIOR OFFICERS CONTINUES FOLLOWING THE INITIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS OF THE JUNTA. CERTAIN OFFICER ASSIGNMENTS/TRANSFERS HAVE BEEN VIEWED WITH GREAT DISDAIN. IN ADDITION, THE RUMORED 12-18 MONTH PERIOD IT WILL TAKE TO HOLD ELECTIONS AND TRANSFER POWER TO A CIVILIAN PRESIDENT IS FAR LONGER THAN THE 30-90 DAY PERIOD ORIGINALLY FORESEEN BY THE YOUNG AND SOMEWHAT NAIVE COUP LEADERS. COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEM IS THE ONGOING AGITATION FOR THE MLN, WHO ALLEGEDLY CONTINUES TO MEET WITH JUNIOR OFFICERS AT HIS HOME. REASSIGNMENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY AND GOVERNMENTAL MINISTRIES SHOULD CONTINUE OVER THE NEXT 10-14 DAYS, AND THE SITUATION SHOULD REMAIN FLUID FOR THAT PERIOD. MEANWHILE, THE JUNIOR OFFICER CORPS, ALTHOUGH STILL GLOATING OVER THEIR SUCCESS OF 23 MARCH, CONTINUE TO CAREFULLY MONITOR THE ACTIONS OF THEIR NEW LEADERS.

9A. ~~(S/NOFORN)~~-DETAILS: (ENTIRE TEXT ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~/NOFORN)



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8. ~~(S/NOFORN)~~ SUMMARY: (ENTIRE TEXT ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~/NOFORN)-
THE COUP OF 23 MARCH WAS ALLEGEDLY PLANNED BY A SMALL NUMBER OF JUNIOR OFFICERS (10-20) FROM THE AIR FORCE, "MARISCAL ZAVALA" BRIGADE, AND HONOR BRIGADE, ALL OF WHICH ARE LOCATED IN THE CAPITAL. ALTHOUGH A NUMBER (NFI) OF OTHER OFFICERS (BOTH SENIOR AND JUNIOR) WERE ALLEGEDLY SOUNDING OUT REGARDING THEIR SUPPORT/INTENTIONS IF SUCH AN ACTION WERE UNDERTAKEN, ONLY THE SMALL PLANNING GROUP ACTUALLY HAD THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE COUP WAS IMMINENT. AS LATE AS SUNDAY (21 MARCH) PLANNING FOR THE COUP CONTINUED AND JUNIOR OFFICERS WITHIN THE PLANNING GROUP WERE STILL DISCREETLY SOUNDING OUT THEIR COUNTERPARTS AND FRIENDS (COPANEROS) COUNTRYWIDE. SUPPORT WITHIN THE MILITARY ON 23 MARCH 23 WAS

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THE JUNIOR OFFICERS, HOWEVER, REALIZE THAT THEY DO NOT POSSESS THE CAPABILITY TO RUN EITHER THE ARMED FORCES OR THE GOVERNMENT. ADDITIONALLY, SINCE THEIR INTENT WAS TO FORCE THE OLD GROUP OUT AND PAVE THE WAY FOR A NEW ADMINISTRATION, THEY WERE WILLING TO RELY ON ASSISTANCE FROM ELECTED (NFI) SENIORS UNTIL NEW ELECTIONS COULD INSTALL A CIVILIAN PRESIDENT. THE REQUIREMENT FOR SENIOR LEADERSHIP THAT WAS NOT TIED TO THE LUCAS ADMINISTRATION LED TO THE SELECTION OF BG JOSE EFRAIN ((RIOS)) MONTT.

CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER JUNIOR OFFICERS FOLLOWING THE COUP INDICATE THAT THE GENERAL MAY HAVE BEEN CONTACTED FOR HIS OPINIONS AND ADVICE. FOR A PERIOD FOLLOWING THE COUP, BG MANUEL BENEDICTO LUCAS GARCIA WAS ALSO CONSIDERED BY SOME (NFI) JUNIOR OFFICERS AS AN EXCELLENT CANDIDATE. DESPITE BEING THE PRESIDENT'S BROTHER, A STRONG RELATIONSHIP DID NOT EXIST BETWEEN THE TWO.

ADDITIONALLY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE GENERAL HAD BEEN APPOINTED BY HIS BROTHER OVER OTHER OFFICERS, MANY JUNIOR OFFICERS FELT HE HAD MORE THAN PROVEN HIMSELF AS A CAPABLE LEADER OVER THE LAST YEAR. THESE FAVORABLE POINTS, HOWEVER, WERE NEGATED SHORTLY AFTER THE 7 MARCH ELECTIONS WHEN GENERAL LUCAS TOGETHER WITH THE MOD PARTICIPATED IN A TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE TO DENOUNCE

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CHARGES THAT THE MILITARY WAS SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTORAL DECISION. HIS (GENERAL LUCAS') STATEMENTS DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE WERE VIEWED AS EMOTIONAL AND NOT BEFITTING THE POSITION HE HELD. ADDITIONALLY, HIS PRESENCE ALONG WITH THREE OTHER MILITARY PERSONNEL AT THE PRESS BRIEFING WAS PERCEIVED AS LINKING THE GUATEMALAN ARMED FORCES TOO CLOSELY TO GENERAL GUEVARA AND THE ALLEGATION OF FRAUD THAT CONTINUED FOLLOWING THE ELECTORAL COUNTY. CONSEQUENTLY, GENERAL LUCAS COULD NOT BE A PART OF ANY NEW GOVERNMENT FORMED AS A RESULT OF A COUP AIMED AT CHANGING THE STATUS QUO. THE FINAL MAKEUP OF THE JUNTA WAS NOT WHAT THE JUNIOR OFFICERS HAD ENVISIONED AND APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THE IDEA OF GENERAL RIOS MONTT. THE REASON FOR THE SELECTION OF BG HORACIO MALDONADO SCHAAD AND COL FRANCISCO LUIS GORDILLO MARTINEZ AS JUNTA MEMBERS IS NOT REALLY CLEAR. ALLEGEDLY, GENERAL MALDONADO WAS PICKED BECAUSE HE (1) REMAINED NEUTRAL WHEN HIS GARRISON'S OFFICERS ANNOUNCED THEY WERE SUPPORTING THE COUP, (2) HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONSIDERED A CAPABLE COMMANDER WHO HAS NOT INVOLVED HIMSELF IN CORRUPT PRACTICES, AND (3) HE HAS SHOWN AN INTEREST IN HELPING THE CIVILIAN POPULATION WHENEVER HE COULD. COL GORDILLO WAS ALSO CONSIDERED AN HONEST AND INTELLIGENT COMMANDER AND WHEN HE WAS INFORMED BY HIS JUNIOR OFFICERS OF THE COUP HE ALLEGEDLY OFFERED THEM HIS FULL SUPPORT.

DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF GENERAL MALDONADO AND COLONEL GORDILLO, THE REAL POWER REMAINS IN THE HANDS OF GENERAL RIOS MONTT. (5) DISSATISFACTION ARISES: THE MAKEUP OF THE JUNTA AND THE RELEGATION OF THE JUNIOR OFFICERS TO POSITIONS AS ADVISORS HAVE PRODUCED SOME CONSTERNATION; HOWEVER, THE SELECTION OF CERTAIN OFFICERS TO FILL KEY POSITIONS HAS PRODUCED THE GREATEST DISSATISFACTION. THE NAMING OF COL FERNANDO ALFONSO ((CASTILLO)) RAMIREZ AS THE AIR FORCE COMMANDER AND COL HENAN ORESTES ((PONCE)) NITSCH AS THE NATIONAL POLICE COMMANDER ARE TWO SUCH EXAMPLES. ADDITIONALLY, THE FAILURE ON THE PART OF THE JUNTA TO IMMEDIATELY REMOVE OTHER OFFICERS CLOSELY TIED TO THE LUCAS REGIME WAS ANOTHER POINT OF CONTENTION. COL HECTOR ISRAEL ((MONTALVAN)) BARES, CHIEF, PRESIDENTIAL STAFF, WAS AN EXAMPLE OF THE LATTER POINT. WHILE THESE PERSONNEL DECISIONS HAVE PRODUCED CRITICISM WITHIN THE JUNIOR OFFICER CORPS, THE RUMORED 12-18 MONTH DELAY BEFORE A CIVILIAN PRESIDENT WILL TAKE OFFICE HAS PRODUCED THE GREATEST PINE AND CRY. IT WAS ENVISIONED BY THE YOUNG COUP LEADERS THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD IMMEDIATELY AND A NEW CIVILIAN PRESIDENT COULD THEN TAKE CHARGE.

AT A MINIMUM, SIX MONTHS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PREPARE THE PAPERWORK NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT AN ELECTION, ADDED ONTO A 3-6 MONTH PERIOD OF THE JUNTA TRYING TO ORGANIZE ITSELF AND THE GOVERNMENT. THAT MEANT THAT A ONE YEAR PERIOD WOULD BE THE

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THE EARLIEST THAT A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED CIVILIAN COULD TAKE OFFICE. [REDACTED] THAT THE SAME OFFICERS WHO CARRIED OFF THE FIRST COUP, WHILE POSSIBLY WILLINGLY TO UNDERSTAND/ACCEPT THAT LONG A DELAY, WOULD PROBABLY NOT STAND IDLY BY IF IT APPEARED THAT THE JUNTA WAS DRAGGING ITS FEET. IT WAS NOW IMPERATIVE THAT THE JUNTA ORGANIZE ITSELF IN A SHORT PERIOD (30-60 DAYS) AND THEN PRESENT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (

[REDACTED] FOR THE NEXT ELECTION. THIS WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS CALMING THE RISING APPREHENSIONS OF THE JUNIOR OFFICER CORPS. ADDITIONALLY, [REDACTED] MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ASSIGNMENT CHANGES WOULD CONTINUE OVER THE NEXT 10-14 DAYS WITH JUNIOR OFFICERS WATCHING CLOSELY WHAT THE MAKE-UP OF THE ENTIRE TEAM WOULD LOOK LIKE. THIS FIRST PROCESS WOULD BE CRITICAL IF THE JUNTA WAS TO ENJOY THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THAT SEGMENT OF THE OFFICER CORPS THAT REMOVED THE FORMER LEADERS.

(6) OUTSIDE AGITATION: FOLLOWING THE COUP, MANY RUMORS WURFACED CONCERNING THE INVOLVEMENT OF CERTAIN GROUPS/PERSONNEL IN THE COUP PLANNING. LEONEL SISNIEGA, FORMER VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF THE MLN, WAS ONE SUCH INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGED HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COUP AND THAT THE JUNIOR OFFICERS WERE SIMPLY HIS INSTRUMENTS. PRIOR TO THE COUP, SISNIEGA OPENED HIS HOME TO ANY OFFICER WHO WISHED TO COME AND COMPLAIN ABOUT THE STATUS QVO. HIS CONNECTION WITH THE JUNIOR OFFICER CORPS WAS ENHANCED BY HIS SON, A LT (NFI) WHO IS CURRENTLY ON ACTIVE DUTY. SUPPOSEDLY, LT SISNIEGA IS NOT HELD IN THE HIGHEST OF ESTEEM BY MANY OF HIS PEERS, BUT HE HAS MANAGED TO INTRODUCE SEVERAL OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES TO HIS FATHER. FOLLOWING THE COUP AND THE INABILITY OF LEONEL SISNIEGA OR THE MLN HIERARCHY TO WORK ITS WAY INTO THE NEW GOVERNMENT, THE ELDER SISNIEGA ONCE AGAIN BEGAN MEETING WITH JUNIOR OFFICERS IN HIS HOME TO LISTEN TO THEIR COMPLAINTS AND PERHAPS CREATE A GREATER FEELING OF DISSATISFACTION, IN HOPES OF FURTHERING HIS OWN CAUSE. DESPITE SISNIEGA'S

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APPARENT CONTINUED SUCCESS OF DRAWING COMPLAINTS FROM HIS VISITORS OVER THE STATUS QVO, THE NUMBER OF OFFICERS INVOLVED (NFI) IS ALLEGEDLY NOT SUFFICIENT NOR IN POSITIONS OF SUFFICIENT POWER (MILITARY COMMANDS) AT THIS TIME TO INITIATE A REPEAT ACTION OF 23 MARCH.

(7) TIME FOR EVALUATION: AS IT APPEARS TO A MAJORITY OF THE JUNIOR OFFICERS, THE JUNTA MUST BE GIVEN TIME (.,18) TO ORGANIZE ITSELF AND ANNOUNCE ITS PROGRAM FOR TURNING THE COUNTRY AROUND WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PREPARING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

[REDACTED] FOR THE MOMENT MANY JUNIOR OFFICERS WERE STILL PREOCCUPIED WITH THE SUCCESS OF THEIR COUP AND THEREFORE NOT DWELLING ON THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE RESULTS; HOWEVER, THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT BITTERNESS COULD REPLACE THE EUPHORIA VERY QUICKLY.

(8) LINGERING PROBLEMS: GENERAL RIOS MONTT IS ALSO TROUBLED BY WHAT TO DO WITH THE MANY OFFICERS WHO ARE OUT OF A JOB AND SIMPLY SITTING AT HOME.

[REDACTED] GENERAL H.B. LUCAS WOULD PROBABLY BE SENT OUT OF THE COUNTRY EVENTUALLY. ADDITIONALLY, EVEN THOUGH OTHER OFFICERS MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN CORRUPT PRACTICES, IT WAS UNLIKELY ANYONE WOULD BE PENALIZED. GENERAL RIOS MONTT'S STRONG RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, COUPLED WITH HIS LONGTIME ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE UPPER ECHELONS OF THE OFFICER CORPS, WOULD PREVENT HIM FROM WAGING A WAR OF VENGEANCE. [REDACTED] RIOS. REASON FOR PREVENTING ANY OFFICIAL (CIVILIAN OR MILITARY) FROM LEAVING THE COUNTRY WAS TO ALLOW A COMPLETE AUDIT OF ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO BY VIRTUE OF THEIR POSITION HANDED GOVERNMENT FUNDS. GENERAL RIOS MONTT HAS REQUIRED THAT A COMPLETE ACCOUNTED BE MADE OF PUBLIC FUNDS, AND WHERE DISCREPANCIES ARE FOUND, THE MONEY WILL BE RECOUPED FROM THE INDIVIDUAL (NFI) BEFORE HE IS PERMITTED TO LEAVE.

(9) THE JUNTA PRESIDENT: DESPITE HIS DEMAGOGIC AND ECCENTRIC MEANINGS, THE JUNIOR OFFICER CORPS PERCEIVED GENERAL RIOS MONTT AS A QUALIFIED LEADER OF DEMONSTRATED HONESTY AND MORALITY.

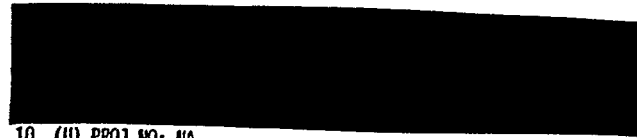
[REDACTED] HIS (GENERAL RIOS MONTT'S) FIRST TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE DID NOT PAINT A VERY FAVORABLE PICTURE OF THE MAN BUT THAT WAS MOST CERTAINLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO FATIGUE AND PRESSURE OF THE DAY'S EVENTS. [REDACTED] IT WOULD BE EASITER TO ACCEPT HIS RELIGIOUS AND MORAL IDIOSYNCRASIES THAN THE DISHONESTY FOUND IN THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION. ADDITIONALLY, GENERAL RIOS MONTT WAS ONLY A CARETAKER OF THE GOVERNMENT, PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED "CIVILIAN" WHO WOULD FOLLOW.

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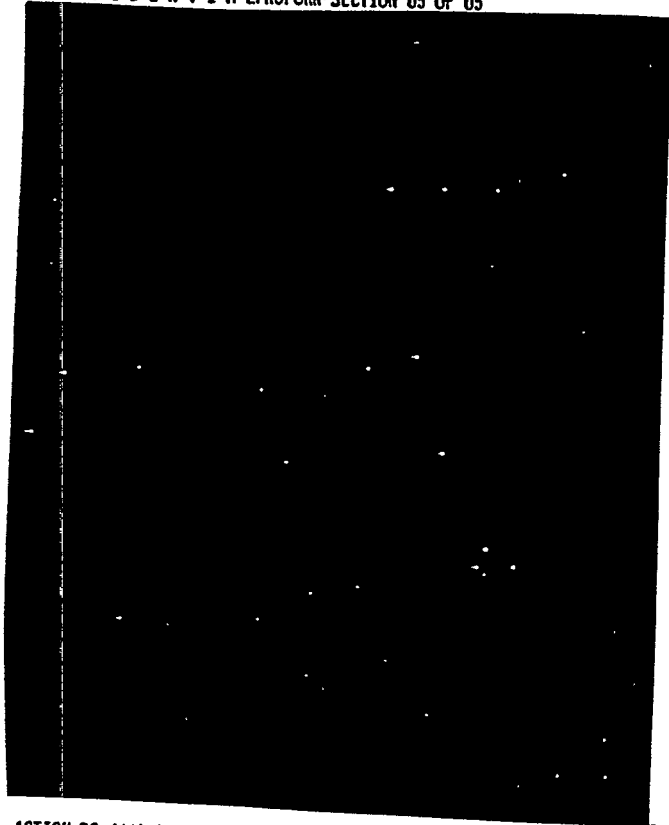
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